

True WISDOM from Above :
O R,
CHRISTIANITY the *Best Understanding.*

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S E R M O N

Preach'd in the PARISH-CHURCH of
East-Wickham, in KENT,
On *Sunday* the 16th of MARCH, 1745-6.

At the FUNERAL of
M A R Y G O D D E N,
Late of WELLEND in that *Parish.*

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*If any Man lack Wisdom let him ask it of GOD, Jam. i. 5.
----- Who giveth Wisdom unto the Simple, Ps. xix. 7.
I thank thee, O Father, LORD of Heaven and Earth, because
thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast
revealed them unto Babes, Matt. xi. 25.
For Judgment I came into this World, that they which see not,
might see ; and that they which see [which say they see] might
be made blind. And some of the Pharisees said, are we blind ?
John ix. 39, 40 41.*

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JOB xxviii. 28.

*Behold! the Fear of the LORD,
that is Wisdom, and to depart
from Evil, is Understanding.*

1. **T**HE Enemy of Mankind could never have taken a more effectual Way to make Man miserable, than (having instill'd his own Pride *especially*, with other his hellish Tempers into him) by making him look to be *independent* on his God.

2. And as Knowledge and Happiness, the one the Cause, the other the Effect of Love in us.—As Knowledge and Happiness, I say, were two of the greatest Blessings which God vouchsafed to confer on the Creature, which He made in his own *Image*; the subtle Serpent knew, he should overturn both; and consequently that Love, whereby *alone* we were enabled to lay hold of Him, if he could but get Man to look for these Things elsewhere, or *independently* of his God; and therefore in Opposition to God, who commanded Man for his Good, and for an Exercise of that Faith and Freedom of Will which he had endow'd him with, *not to eat* of such a Fruit in the Garden; *spiritually* meaning, not to look to be happy in any Creature *out of Himself*—the sole Fountain of all Happiness. The Devil, I say, in *Opposition* to God, bids

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Man *eat*, that is, be happy elsewhere ; (and how dutifully have all Men in their *natural* State, ever since obey'd his Command! telling him, in *flat Contradiction* to God, that he *should not die* ; though God had said he should, and that the very Day he should seek for Happiness *out of* Himself, where God knew it could not be had : And indeed, is there a Creature from an *Arch-Angel* to the poorest Reptile, that can subsist or do well, that is, be happy *out of* God ——— out of that Station, or Mode of Happiness, which the God of Wisdom and Love has appointed it ?

3. And then, as to the other Blessing, *Knowledge* (a great Blessing I call it ; for we can never love, that is, be happy in any thing till we *know* it) the same subtle Serpent, who envied Man's Happiness, and knew, that he himself lost his own through *Concupiscence* (the direct Opposite to the Love of God) and Pride, or a Spirit of *Independence* : The *Liar from the Beginning* inspires *this* Spirit also into Man—makes him look to be *wise* as well as *happy* out of God, telling him with a Lye in his Mouth, that God did know, that in the Day he eat of the *Tree of Knowledge*, his Eyes should be open'd, and Mankind should be as *Gods themselves*, *knowing Good and Evil* : Whereas God knew the direct contrary, viz. that in the Day they should dare to do it, they should become totally ignorant both of Himself and their own true Happiness—lose the Knowledge they had, and instead of *Gods*, should become *Devils incarnate* ; and so remain, till God should in his Wisdom and Love, appoint a Way (even the *Gospel*, and *Faith* the Means of its Application) to bring Man back again to his *Dependence* on his God, as the Word

Faith implies, whereby he might again be wise and happy.

4. Hence it is, that Man in his *unawaken'd*, *natural* State, or before Faith, the *Grace* of CHRIST, and the *Inspiration* of his Spirit, as our Church speaks, ^a has ever since been both *ignorant*, and *foolish*, and *miserable*; and till made *sensible* of this by the *reproving* Spirit of God, ^b which *alone* can enlighten or make him wise again; and that in order to make him happy; *such* he *must* continue: However, the Devil may still delude him with the *Appearance* of Wisdom and Happiness (as all Learning without Grace, and Riches without Godliness may be call'd) till the Mask shall fall off, together with this Veil of Flesh and Blood. Hence, also, it is, that Man (till thus awakened and *taught of God*) is ever looking to make up for this great Defect, or hunting for a *Substitute* for what he has lost, in created Good — Looking not only to be happy in every thing but God; but also curious and inquisitive, and with Pain and Weariness of the Flesh, seeking to know every thing but God: Or, if to know God at all, yet in a Way, that such Knowledge can never be attained, viz. by human Learning, and scholastick Education, but all in vain! a *continued* presumptuous *snatching* at the forbidden Tree! No; the *World by Wisdom* cannot know God, says the Apostle, and yet *vain Man would be wise, though Man be born like a wild Ass's Colt*.

5. It is the Vanity of *this* Knowledge—the Vanity both of knowing every thing but God; as also, the Vanity of seeking to know God

^a Art. 13.

^b John xvi. 8.

otherwise than God will be known—the Vanity of being wise above that is written in Things concerning God — the Vanity of attempting such Knowledge in a Way it never can be obtained — It is *this* Vanity, which *Job* is reproving in this Place; declaring the Truth, of what *Moses* says, in the 29th of *Deuteronomy*, “ that secret Things belong unto the LORD our God, but those Things only which are revealed belong to us ” — “ That God hath not revealed, nor communicated to Man many of the Secrets of Nature; nor the Wisdom of his Providence in governing the Universe, and the particular Things thereof, but only the Knowledge of his Law, by which Man ought to govern himself ” Or, in a Word — “ That Man hath only so much true or proper Wisdom, as he feareth God, and departeth from Evil. ”

6. The Ignorance and vain Affectation of proud Man in knowing many Things *without*, or *beside* God (which yet was the only Knowledge originally designed him) is finely ridiculed in many Parts of this Divine Book, as, *Hearken unto this, O Job, and consider the wonderful Works of God. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the Light of his Cloud to shine? Dost thou know the Ballancings of the Clouds—the wonderful Works of him, who is perfect in Knowledge? Where is the Way where Light dwelleth? And as for Darkness, where is the Place thereof? Knowest thou it because thou wast then born, or because the Number of thy Days is great? Knowest thou the Ordinances of Heaven? And canst thou set the Dominion thereof in the Earth? Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the ALMIGHTY unto Perfection? —*

7. And

7. And *even* that Knowledge, which is *proper* for Man ; as mentioned in my Text—that Wisdom which causeth him to *fear* God—that *Understanding* that maketh him depart from Evil, even this is not attainable by Man with all his Advantages of Learning and Philosophy. No, No: No more than a Man can be happy in any created Being *out of* God. And indeed reasonable it is, that it should be so: *Thou art wise, O God, in all thy Ways, as well as holy in all thy Works!* This Procedure of God towards Man is founded on *Justice*; for since Man (at the Devil's Instigation) sought, as we have heard, to be wise and happy out of God: God's *Majesty, Honour and Dominion*, as well as his *Justice and Equity*, engaged Him to preclude Man from both true Wisdom and Happiness—to keep the Rebel from *snatching* at these Blessings, till *convinced* of his Folly and Misery, he should look to be deeply humbled, should sue to be reconciled to God, and by better Repentance seek to be re-established in that *reasonable Dependence*, which the *Cardinal Gospel Grace, Faith*, implies — that equitable Dependence and Relyance on the ALMIGHTY AND ALL SUFFICIENT GOD, which constitutes the Happiness of every Creature, that he hath made. This makes that Text in the 3d of *Genesis* plain; *So he drave out the Man, and he placed at the East of the Garden of Eden Cherubims and a flaming Sword, which turned every Way to keep the Way of the Tree of Life.* That since Man had the monstrous Insolence, to look to be wise and happy out of God, he should be *neither*, but in God's own Way; even by humbly accepting of JESUS CHRIST as a *free Gift* — ^c as his *Wisdom, his*

Righteousness, his Sanctification, and Redemption:
 * And this shews a *peculiar Emphasis* in the Words introductory to my Text ; and to *Man* he said, to *Man*, who sought to be wise and happy *out of God*—to *Man*, who pried deeper into the Secrets of Nature, which concerned him not, than that Fear and Holiness of God, which was the *one Thing necessary*, or the *whole Duty of Man*—to *Man* he said, *Behold the Fear of the LORD*, that is *Wisdom*, and to depart from Evil, that is *Understanding*.

8. The *great Enquiry* then, my Brethren, is what you read in the 12th Verse, *Where shall Wisdom be found? And where is the Place of Understanding? The Depth saith, It is not in me; and the Sea saith, It is not in me.* No: (O the *Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD!* how unsearchable are his *Judgments*, and his *Ways past finding out!*) Hear ye and see, where it only can be found: See, see, *the Light of the Knowledge of GOD in the Face of JESUS CHRIST!* Hear ye, what Wisdom reveals of himself: *Ye*, I mean to whom GOD hath given Ears to hear — *Ye Meek*, whom he guideth in Judgment — *Ye Gentle*, whom he teacheth his Way: For *this Secret of the LORD* is among them that fear him *only*, and he sheweth *them* his Covenant — Hear, *ye Babes*, to whom GOD revealeth those Things, which he has always hid, and *still* doth hide from the *Wise and Prudent* of this World — those *Wise and Prudent*, who, as in the Beginning, are still *snatching*, I've said, at the Tree of Knowledge, and *will know GOD without*

Himself, *without* his Spirit, *without* his Teaching, *without* his Inspiration : ^e In spite of his Cherubims with their flaming Swords. Hear, I say, but I know ye will hear — Ye, who look to be *taught* of GOD — Hear what the *Wisdom of GOD* says of Himself: *The LORD possessed me in the Beginning of his Way, before his Works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was: When there were no Depths, I was brought forth: When there were no Fountains abounding with Water: Before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills I was brought forth. While as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the Fields, nor the highest Part of the Dust of the World (even that Worm Man, which afterwards exalted himself against his Maker) when he prepared the Heavens I was there; when he set a Compass upon the Face of the Deep; when he gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters should not pass his Commandment; when he appointed the Foundations of the Earth: Then, was I by him, as one brought up with him. I was daily his Delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable Part of his Earth, and my Delights were with the Sons of Men.*

9. Now then hearken unto me, O ye Children, who have *known* the Father — who have by his Spirit been taught to know your own Hearts through his Convictions of Sin, and so are *drawn* by Him to his Son. ^f

^e See the Doctrine of the Ch. of Eng. in her 13th Art. her Coll. Beginning of Com. Office, 5th Sunday after Easter. 1st and 2d Part of the first Hom. ^f John vi. 44.

10. And yet, let me reflect a little; though *safe* it be for *you* (if I may use the Apostle's Stile) & to hear those Things again and again, which ye have already received and known: It was not our departed *Sister's* Intention in the Choice of this Text, to instruct those who already *know* GOD and JESUS CHRIST, whom He hath sent—— who already *know* Him in the *Experience* of his Divine Names, JESUS! CHRIST! IMMANUEL! and by *such* Knowledge of Him, have eternal Life: ^h But, as she *labour'd* it much within the Sphere of her Conversation when alive; It was her Design rather in this Discourse, to instruct those, who are still ignorant of the Truth, who know not GOD, or presumptuously *fancy* they know Him by the Powers of Nature and Humanity without the Teachings of his Holy Spirit.

11. To *you* then, who are *still* in the Dark-ness of that *independent Subtily* ⁱ which Satan inspired, falsely call'd Knowledge—who are more particularly in the Dark, because ye know Nothing of Him who is the *Light of the World* ^k—— who talk indeed of JESUS—but mean Nothing, that is, look for no Salvation *from Sin* through Him, though he was called, and *was* JESUS for *that very End* ^l—— to *you*, who have dream't ye were *christian* without *Chrism*, ^m without that *Unction*, which *alone* can make you *such*; without that *Anointing* from Him the HOLY ONE ⁿ—— that *Anointing* from Above, which

^g Phil. iii. 1. ^h John xvii. 3.—1 John v. 13. ⁱ Gen. iii. 1. 5. ^k John i. 9. —viii. 12. ^l Matt. i. 21. ^m A Contradiction in Terms. ⁿ 1 John ii. 20, 27. teach-

teacheth all Things to those, who quench not the Spirit — to *you*, who are baptized every Way, but with our LORD's *own* Baptism of the *Holy Ghost and Fire* ; and who have never yet duly reflected, what your own Church means, where she exhorts you so earnestly to pray to God, " that of his bounteous Mercy he will grant to the *Unbaptized* that Thing which by Nature (by all the polite Substitutes for Grace) they cannot have " ; even that they may be " baptized with the *Holy Ghost*, " the *Thing signified*, as well as with *Water* the *outward Sign* — to *you* who have heard of CHRIST only by the Hearing of the Ear, but for want of his *Unction* have no *experimental* Knowledge of his *Prophetical, Priestly, or Kingly* Powers in your Hearts, and are perishing through lack of *this Knowledge* — to *you*, who by your *fruitless, dead* Opinion of him (which yet ye call *Faith*) look for no *Conformity* in your selves to his *Birth, Life, Cross, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension* — to *you*, I say, I will address the Main of this Discourse, that *ye* also may be *wise* in the Sense of my Text ; and that being *wise* in Time, *ye* may shine as the Stars for ever and ever. °

12. And *now*, may the LORD appear in the Congregation ! may the Spirit of God accompany the Word preached ! and prepare the Ground of your Hearts ! otherwise the Seed falling by the Way-side, or into Stony Places, or among Thorns, may become unfruitful. May the Spirit of God *convince* you of your natural Ignorance and Folly, however learned and wise

you may take your selves to be, or appear among Men! that so ye may feel your Want of CHRIST the Prophet—your Want of *that Wisdom* which is *Grace*: Of which such high Characters are given in the Context by the Spirit of GOD; even, *that it cannot be gotten for Gold, neither shall Silver be weighed for the Price thereof. It cannot be valued (or purchased) with the Gold of Ophir: With the precious Onyx, or the Sapphire. The Gold and the Chrystal cannot equal it, and the Exchange of it shall not be for Jewels of fine Gold. No Mention shall be made of Coral or of Pearls; for the Price of Wisdom is above Rubies. The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure Gold.*

13. Whence then (since it cannot be found in the Extent of Nature, and since nothing, nor even Learning nor Education can compass it) whence then cometh *Wisdom*, that is, *Grace*? and where is the Place of Understanding, that is, of the *Knowledge* and *Love* of GOD and Man? Surely it is *hid from the Eyes of all living*, says our Author: But GOD *understandeth the Way thereof*, and *He knoweth the Place thereof*.

14. If then, my Brethren, we would attain to this Blessing of Blessings—this *true Wisdom*, which *is from above* only, and which *alone* can make Man both wise and happy; we must seek it in GOD *alone*, from whence it first came, and was imparted to Man—we must seek it in the GOD INCARNATE; in GOD MANIFEST *in the Flesh*; in GOD *thus* again made *communicable* to Man; in Him, *without whom no Man can come to the Father*; in CHRIST the Prophet; in *his Spirit* that teacheth all Things; in Him who is
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the Wisdom of God, For it is plain (I think) from what has been said, that since Man *would* be wise and happy *independently* of God, and is *therefore* become *ignorant*, and *foolish*, and *miserable*; that the *true* Wisdom which must *restore* him, must be that which is *again* imparted by God: And that the true *Happiness* must result from *this* Wisdom.

15. Haste we then to *him*, my Brethren, who is the Wisdom of God — Haste we to him by Faith, preceded by Repentance (that is, a *feeling* Sense of our great Want) *that Faith* [πιστις] — I mean, which implies such *Trust*, *Reliance* and *Dependance* upon God *again*, as shall intirely destroy that *irrational* and *absurd*, as well as unhappy Spirit of *Independence* on him, inspired by the *Devil* into the *whole Nature* of Man — *that Faith* which brings back again to God the Heart of Man so wretchedly estranged from him. Haste we to *him*, I say, by Faith, who is the Wisdom of God — in *whom* are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge — in *whom* dwelleth all the *Fullness* of the Godhead bodily: And on *whom* as Man [the *Nature* of Man as general as in the first *Adam*] was pur'd out the Spirit of God *without Measure*; ^p in order to be imparted (in that *Unction* which alone christianizeth) to *me* and to *you* and to *every Soul* of Man; who through the *reproving* Spirit (as you shall hear farther) is convinced of his *Want* ^q of true Wis-

^p John iii. 34.

^q *This Conviction is before, or precedes that Acceptance above-mention'd; which must always go before justifying Faith, though not before that lower Degree of Faith mention'd* Heb. xi. 6.

dom and Knowledge, and consequently of Salvation, thro' CHRIST.

16. As then, I say, we can never attain the *great Blessing* in the Text, even that Fear of the LORD which is *true Wisdom*: That Understanding which shall enable us to depart from Evil but through the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST: Let us consider next, how the *Power* of this Gospel (the *Letter* and *Form* of which we have long enough *talked of*) how the *Power* of this Gospel may be brought *into* our Hearts — how we may experience this Gospel to be what St. Paul calls it, *the Power of God* (it is an amazing Word, the *Power of God to Salvation*: Or (what is the same Thing) how CHRIST being *first* made our *Wisdom*, he may be afterwards our *Righteousness*, our *Sanctification*, and our *Redemption*, as the *Apostle* sums up the whole of the Gospel — how that being made first our *Prophet*, he may be also our *Priest* and our King.

17. Now *this*, my Brethren, the *great Prophet* of God, who came to reveal to us the Will of his Father, and shew us how we shall come back again unto him, tells us, as in many other Places, so more particularly in the 16th Chapter of St. *John*: This he tells us, he does by his own holy Spirit, proceeding from his Father and himself. So that *they*, who deny or *make light of* the Work of the Spirit — the Inspiration of Grace in the Hearts of Men, (as is too generally the Turn of this unbelieving Age) both to prepare them for the Gospel by giving them Repentance, and to *apply* the Blessings thereof to Men *so prepared* to receive it — *these Persons* do strike at the very Foundation of all: And if thus, they *finally* continue to resist the
Holy

Holy Ghost, and to *speake against him*, can have no Redemption thro' CHRIST, or Salvation from the Guilt, Pollution, and Wages or Punishment of Sin neither in this World, nor in the World to come: For the whole of what CHRIST has done must be applied or *brought home* into our Souls by his own Spirit, the other *Comforter*, or we perish for ever.

18. Hear, how our LORD describes his Spirit's Office, or what he himself will do by the *other Comforter*. *When He* (says he) *the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine,* (as if he should say, the *Power, Efficacy, and Virtue* of every Step of my Mediation) *and shall shew or apply it unto you.* And *this* more particularly he will do, by *reproving* or convincing *the World* (and every Individual who resists not this Spirit) *of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment.* O! what Words! the whole Process indeed of the Work of Grace in our Souls, from the first Hearing the Voice of GOD, or from the first Awakening of the Soul to see its Nakedness, its Misery, its Death, its Damnation on the Loss of GOD's Image; to the *full Restoration* again of that Image in it! The Word in the Original, is *strong* ἐλεγξει, —the Spirit will *demonstrate* to the Soul (the Soul that does not, as I have said, resist it) He will *evidence* to the Soul its Death in its natural State; its Recovery under the Word of Reconciliation in the Forgiveness of its Sins; and lastly its Life; having obtain'd, through the *Gospel*, Victory over the Devil and Sin; or, in other Words, *Pardon, Peace, and Holiness.*

19. And this *Conviction*, or *Evidence* to the illuminated Soul (let the barely learned World despise and revile this Work as the *contrary* Spirit shall lead them) this *Demonstration* of the Spirit, or *Evidence* to the gracious Soul, must go through these *three Stages* reprov'g it (as you have heard) of *Sin*, *Righteousness*, and *Judgment*; that is, *evidencing* to it, its *Death*, its *Recovery*, its *Life*: So making St. Paul's Definition of Faith, explicative of his Master's, in this Place: Even that it is Ἐλεγκτῶν πραγμάτων ἢ ἐλεπομένων the *Evidence of Things not seen*—those *great important Things*! this *Condemnation* or *Death*! this *Peace* or *Sense* of God's pardoning Love! this *Power* and *Dominion* over Sin! *all of them Things* not seen to the *natural* Man; still *graceless*, still *unawaken'd*, yea, *dead* in *Trespases* and *Sins*.

20. Know then, my Brethren, that there is a *threefold State*, which every Soul must be in, from its *Death* in Sin, to its *Life* of *Righteousness*—from that of a *natural* Man conceived and born in *original Sin*, and consequently *dead* to God, to that of a *Christian*, or a true Believer. This *threefold State*, I say, of the *Convinced* of Sin—of the *Justified*—and of the *Sanctified*—or of those, who believe in the *Father*, only; of those who believe in the *Father* and the *Son*; and of those who believe in the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*; as our Church sums up the whole Work of Grace in her *authoritative Blessing*—this *threefold State*, in a Word, of those who are under the *Law*, and thereby *spiritually self-condemn'd*; of those who are under *Grace*, and therefore *know* that they have *Redemption*, through Faith, in the
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Blood of CHRIST, even *the Forgiveness of their Sins* ; and of those who are still in a higher State of Grace, that is, in the *Kingdom of God*, and therefore so *anointed*, or so *christianized*, or so *sanctified*, as to love God—as to have Dominion over Sin—This *threefold State* must every Soul pass through, from the Death in the *first*, to the Life of the *second Adam*. But O! what Cause of Grief! this *Sum* of Salvation through CHRIST, is that *very Thing*—each of those States are *the Blessing*, which the reputable, the honourable, the polite, the self-righteous, good Christians of this Age, who so love God and Manmon! (whose Religion may be summed-up in that *formal Decency*, which the *Apostle* calls the *Form of Godliness without the Power*)—*this Christianity*, I say, in its several Stages, is what (with those of old) *they* are daily putting from them, and so judging themselves unworthy of everlasting Life! *

21. To you, therefore, wheresoever ye be ; and with what Titles of Honour soever ye be dignified, seeking not that Honour (*to be the Sons of God*) that cometh of God only—to you who speak against that Holy Spirit, which alone can bring you thro' these several States of *Unction*, of *Christianity*—to you, who are therefore in a State of Death, do I cry—in a *State of Death*! (O what a Call for all the Bowels of Compassion and Love is here!) and yet know it not ; that is, though ye say, now and then “ we are Sinners, ” mean nothing—experience as little of the *Misery* of Sin, of the *Damnation* of the fallen, polluted Nature which is in you, as ye do of Salvation (the *present Salvation* from it, implied in the Name JESUS) or of the Love

* Acts xiii. 46.

* John v. 44.

of GOD, *having your Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of GOD, through the Ignorance that is in you, because of the Blindness of your Heart*: So *past feeling* that ye are quiet, and easy, and happy ^u *even in this State*, and both talk and think of *one JESUS* with as much *Indifference* as the *Heathen Fesus* did. To you I cry aloud, and *will not spare*, though the World threaten; if so be ye may be awaken'd to see your selves, and fly to the hitherto slighted JESUS, from that Wrath of GOD, which is now ready to burst upon this *unbelieving*, and *therefore* wicked People, whom the Long-suffering of GOD, neither in his Mercies nor Corrections hath *hitherto* brought to Repentance. Be admonished *even* by me, to flee from the Wrath to come. Pray, pray daily (for every one that asketh shall have) pray incessantly, that the reproving Spirit may show you to your selves, and bring you, being awaken'd by it, into the *first Stage* of the Gospel; under the Convictions of Sin. Listen, O listen, no longer to the Voice of the World, who would keep you (with the blind Man ^w) from Him, that is the Light thereof; who have hitherto told you, that this *scriptural Christianity* ^x this Gospel Doctrine is "*Cant, Enthusiasm, Methodism, or melancholy Madnes*"—one of a Thousand of Satan's *Devices* to lull you *still* asleep in Sin, and keep you at the greatest Distance he can from the Gospel of your Salvation?

22. Now then, my Brethren (to return to you that hear me) as many of you as are con-

^u Luke xi. 21. ^w Mark x. 47. 48. ^x Read Mr. John Wesley's Sermon, so call'd, preach'd before the University of Oxford, Aug. 24, 1744. *vincad*

vinced of Sin, and are brought to that *Sense* of your selves—that *brokenness* of Heart which is *Gospel Repentance* ^y (for I mean something more than what is *commonly call'd* Repentance; or that Sorrow of the World, *that worketh Death*) as many of you as are waiting for the *Consolation of Israel*, and are *therefore* seeking CHRIST, *sorrowing*: So many of you as are in the *first Stage* of Grace——You are by the Spirit *convinced of Sin*; and here is the Place of that *Fear of the LORD that is the BEGINNING OF WISDOM.* ^z You are *now* under the Dispensation of the Father, *drawing you to the Son*: And our LORD tells you, that he [only] who hath *thus heard and learned of the Father will come unto him.* ^a *Now* are you under the Law of the Father: the *condemning Law*: ^b That threatneth Wrath and speaketh Death: That slayeth the Sinner, ^c who lately was *alive without it*: ^c *That Law* that ever must be *our Schoolmaster* to bring us to CHRIST. ^d *Now* are you under the Ministry of the *Baptist*, whose Office is *continued* in every *faithful Minister* of the Gospel, who is instructed by the Spirit *rightly to divide the Word of Truth*——when to preach the Law, and when the Gospel.——Who *dares* constantly to speak the Truth, boldly to rebuke Vice——^e tell Men, that they are by Nature a *Generation of Vipers*, and call *reproved* Sinners from among them to Repentance. *Now*, it is, that you begin to see a little, though it be but

^y See a Sermon, so call'd, preached by the Author, on the Fast Day, April 11, 1744.

^z Ps. cxi. 10.—Prov. ix. x. ^a John vi. 45. ^b Rom. iv. 15.—^c c vii. 9. ^d Gal. iii. 24. ^e Col. for John Baptist's Day.

Men as Trees walking : Now, are you startled out of your Dream, and begin to suspect that all Things are not right with you. Now, that the Scales begin to fall from your Eyes, you discern, at length, that the Pleasures of the Devil and Sin are *Swine's Husks* ; and tired of the Service of that *polite Citizen* who so employ'd you, you begin to come to yourself, and resolve to return unto your Father.

23. Now then, my Brother, that you see Sin, it is become exceeding sinful to you indeed. It makes you cry out, *O wretched Man that I am ! What shall I do to be saved ! Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death !* Now is that Self sufficiency and Pride that Satan spoke [†] into thee laid low. The Self-righteousness of the Pharisee, and all the Pomp of thy boasted natural Works without CHRIST, are nothing. And tho' formerly thou hast been one of the World's good People, so good in thyself ! so self-righteous ! (knowing not, at the same Time, that thou wast wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked) I may now venture to ask thee ; What is become of the God-like Creature ? Art thou then a GOD thyself ! [†] Nay, nay, but enter into the Rock and hide thyself in the Dust, for Fear of the LORD. ' All thy humane, barely moral Excellencies cannot stand before his convincing Spirit ; they are become lighter than Vanity itself : Yea, in the Scale of Salvation, they are as light as the Dust in the Ballance ; and thy strong Prop^r, like weak Reeds, are letting thee fall into Destruction. '

[†] Gen. iii. 5.

24. Thou hitherto *insensible* Sinner ! Now that thou art *quickened through Grace*, and hast thy *Spiritual Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil* : Now that thou no longer justifyest thy self, but that thy Mouth is stopt : Now that thou art *become guilty* before God, and standest in thy fallen Nakedness in his Presence ; *What thinkest thou of CHRIST ?* Dost thou not wish for *this JESUS* that can *save* thee from thy Sins ? Hast thou not some Esteem of this *Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World ?* Does not the Merit of CHRIST rise in thine Eyes now ? *now* that thou seest thy Want of Him ? though there was no *Form nor Comeliness in him before ?* though there was no *Beauty that thou shouldst desire him*, Is he not *precious* in thine Eyes *now ?* I *know* he is.

25. Come in, then my Brother ; come into the Gospel : Come into the *second Dispensation*. Thou hast believed in God the Father ; hear his own Voice, *Believe also in me*. And what a Blessing is it to thy Soul that thou hast lived to hear even in *these Days*, that CHRIST *receiveth, now receiveth Sinners*—as Sinners—guilty, polluted, wretched, *lost* & Sinners—through his own Grace, *awaken'd, repenting*, that is, *Sin-forsaking, believing Sinners !* *Fear not, be of good Cheer ;* he says, *arise, he calleth thee*. The *Kingdom of Heaven is now at Hand*, for thou hast repented, or rather, he hath *given thee Repentance*.^h In the *first Dispensation*, thou learnedst (under the Ministry of the Messenger sent before his Face) *Repentance towards God*, and *that* has prepared thee for *Faith to-*

^g *Matt. xviii. 11. Luke xv. 32.*

v. 31.

^h *Acts*

wards

wards our LORD JESUS CHRIST. ⁱ *John* has fulfill'd his Course in thee, and thou hast justified GOD, being baptized of him: ^k Though the *Pharisees* and the *Lawyers*, together with the harmless, good People of this World, who *so* justify themselves, and therefore *so* deride CHRIST—though the *Ninety Nine*, who need no Repentance (and *that* because *they* speak against that Spirit that should reprove them, and shew them their Hearts) *have* and *do* reject the Counsel of GOD against themselves, *being not baptized of him*. ^k And now that thou hast received the Messenger to prepare the Way in thy Heart for *Him that cometh after him* (for some there are that relish not his rough Ministry, *his Baptism of Repentance*, but *hastily* justify themselves) this Messenger directeth thee to CHRIST, saying, *Behold the Lamb of GOD, that taketh away the Sins of the World*. O! happy Soul, though lately *so unhappy*! O saved Soul, though lately in a State of Damnation! Thou now *experiencest* what it is to be *reproved* of Righteousness, ^m as strongly as thou didst before, what it was to be *reproved* of Sin. ^m And hast *within* thee that *Ἐλεος*, that strong Argument of thy Peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST—that Peace which passeth all [human] Understanding, which many of the learned Divines of this Age are still insensibly knocking their wise Heads against. O! is not *that* even *now* true—is not CHRIST indeed *come into this World for Judgment, that they which see not* (such as thou and *Paul*, who was a Fool for CHRIST) ⁿ *might see*, and that they

ⁱ *Acts* xx. 21.

^{k k} *Luke* vii. 20, 30.

^l *Isa.* xxviii. 16.

^{m m} *John* xvi. viii.

ⁿ *1 Cor.* iii. 18.—iv. 10.

which

which see (or rather *say they see*) *might be made blind ! °*

26. Here then is the genuine Spring of that Fear of the LORD, *which is Wisdom* : For no Man can fear GOD (that is, live in his Fear, or fear to offend him) till he love him ; and no Man can love GOD till he has a Sense of GOD's Love to himself *through CHRIST*—till he *know* that his Wrath is turned away, and that he is *well pleased* with him in his *beloved Son*. For so says St. John, *we love him because he first loved us* : And St. Luke, *she loved much, because (not for P) she had much forgiven, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*.

27. And now, my Brethren, having gone through the two first Stages of Grace: Having been convinced of Sin and of Righteousness—having *so sorely felt* our Want of CHRIST, and known moreover that GOD on our Repentance and Faith [his Gifts] has for CHRIST's Sake, forgiven us : We come to the *third Dispensation*—the *highest* State of the Blessings of the Gospel, wherein we still look with the same Faith [ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΝ] the same inward, certainly—the same Evidence or *Witness* of the Spirit, for this *unspeakable* Gift. For I have said in Opposition to our *new Divinity*, which it seems “ cannot distinguish the Divine Influences of the *Holy Spirit*, from the *natural* Operations of our own Minds, ” that is, cannot discern between Good and Evil, between Light and Dark-

° John ix. 39, 40, 41. P The common English Translation perverteth the whole Design of the Passage.

ness: I have said, that this *Evidence of Things not seen*, must go through the *whole Work of Grace*; from the first Awakening of the Soul, to the Restoration of the Divine Image in it. This *last* being particularly the *chief* of those Things *that are not seen* to the *natural Man*, and that because he not only looks, as I have said (at the Devil's Word) to be wise as well as happy [to *know* as well as *eat*] *independently of God*; but, till he *receives Power from on high*, or is *created anew*, he loveth the Pollution of Sin more than Holiness and Purity of Heart, that shall make him *like God* again as in the Beginning.

28. Now we are come, I say, to the *highest Stage of the Gospel*, wherein we look for the *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him*—that *Wisdom of CHRIST*, or *Divine Understanding*, that shall enable us *indeed* to depart from *Iniquity*; from *all Iniquity*, not only the *outward* evil Work, but the *inward* evil Tempers, from whence evil Works flow. In this Stage of the Gospel the Soul is *convinced of Judgment*. Satan and all his Powers—all his *bellicious Affections* proceeding from *proud Independence and Self-sufficiency* are arraign'd in the Soul, by that Spirit of Judgment, which the Prophet speaks of: *When the LORD shall have wash'd away the Filth of the Daughter of Sion, and shall have purg'd the Blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the Spirit of Judgment, and by the Spirit of Burning*—That Divine Unction, or Fiery-Baptism of our LORD himself, which *alone* can make us *Christians* indeed.

29. Here the Matter goes *very deep*—the Spirit launches *farther* into the Soul. But observe,

serve, my Brethren, I mean not those *whimsical Lights*, or *visionary Ravings* justly call'd *Enthusiasm*: Those inward Revelings of the Devil (they may be) which are in any Sense contrary to *sound Reason* * or the *written Word* of God. The Spirit speaks *deeper* into the Soul than the *natural Man* can comprehend, or indeed desires; to whom the Blessings of *Christianity* are the Folly of Follies: For the *natural Man*, says St. Paul, *receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: But he that is spiritual, the Christian taught of God, judgeth all Things concerning his Salvation in each of these States, yet he himself is judged of by no [natural] Man,* ^q Here the Work of Grace rises upon our Hands. The Sinner (how great soever, for CHRIST will in no wise cast any out that thus come to him ^r) who before was awaken'd, reprov'd of Sin, and

* By sound Reason I mean not what some call that distinguishing Faculty of Human Nature, which discriminates it from the Brute-Creation, but that which accords with the revealed Will of God—I mean not that Subtilty of the Serpent that opposes Revelation, and which some call Reason. Surely, they who are guided by this Subtilty instead of that Divine Right Reason, are the poor Enthusiasts! though liberal they be of that Appellation to those, who are looking (as in the Beginning) to know and be wise in God only, in Matters of Religion. The Subtilty indeed of the Serpent may do for the Support of his Kingdom, or the perishing Concerns of this World.

^q 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

^r John vi. 37.

—Matt. xi. 28.

so brought to Repentance, and then reproved or *convinced of Righteousness*; now knows what it is to be reproved of Judgment also; even that by drinking into the Sufferings^s and Death of CHRIST, Sin is *so destroyed* in him, that he has Power and Dominion *over* it—he now *breaks loose* from the Devil: For in being made *like his Master* in his Humiliation, and *that* in order to recover his *primitive* Perfection, ^t his Master sets him free, and he is *free indeed* ^u—he returns to the Service of his God, that is *perfect Freedom*—he is brought back again (through Faith) into *that Dependance* on his God, that constitutes the *Happiness* as well as Freedom of *Angels* and *Arch-Angels*. Now does he *experience* that the Gospel is the *Power of God to Salvation*, not only the *Knowledge of Salvation by the Forgiveness of Sin*, but *Redemption* also from the *Defilement* thereof—that Faith is *Power* ^w renewing his Soul; creating it anew; causing it to be born again; bruising the Serpent's Head by destroying Sin: Or (as our Church expresses it) *utterly abolishing the whole Body of Sin* ^w—*cleansing the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit*, so that we may *love God perfectly*, ^x and that the Remainder of our Lives *thereafter* may be pure and holy. ^y He now from his own Experience affirms, that God is not only *Love*, but that he is *Truth*: For he experiences the *Accomplishment* of all the other Promises, which go *beyond Forgiveness of Sins*—*those Promises* also, which

^s Matt. xx. 23—Rom. vi. 5. ^t Luke vi.

40. ^u John viii. 36.

^w 1 Pet. xv.

^y Office of Baptism.

^x Col. Com. Office

^y Form of Absol.

in CHRIST JESUS are *Yea* and *Amen*—even that GOD is *putting* his *Law* in his inward *Parts*; for he gives him that *Love* which is the *fulfilling* of the *Law*—the *SOLE SOURCE* of that *Godly Fear* which is *Wisdom*, of that *UNDERSTANDING* which is to depart from *Evil*. In a *Word*; he *experiences* what GOD promises by his *Prophet*—that He is giving him a *new Heart*—that He is *putting* his *Spirit* *within* him—that He is *cleansing* him from all his *Filthiness*—from all his *Idols*—that He is *saving* him from all his *Uncleanesses*, that is, all evil *Concupiscences* contrary to the *Love* of GOD—all unholy *Tempers*, *Affections*, and *Desires*; whether *Pride*, or the *Rebel Will*, or *inordinate* *Love* of created *Good*, call'd *covetous Idolatry*, or *Anger*, *Envy*, *Hatred*, *Malice*, *Hypocrisy*, and *Deceit*.

30. And lest the Believer, who has *now* gone through all the *Stages* of *Grace*, should be *exalted above Measure*; or even think more highly of himself than he ought to think through the *Abundance* of these *Communications*, GOD keeps him *low*; gives him the constant *Attendant* of *Love*, which is *Humility*—makes him daily feel his own *Nothingness*—though *always rejoicing* when he looks to CHRIST; yet *always sorrowful* or *penitent* when he looks on himself.^z And *because* he feels, that the *Spirit* of GOD is restoring the *divine Image* in his *Soul*, in all the *Graces* of the *Holy Spirit*, therefore he is still the more *humbled*: *Experiencing* the *contrary* of what some think, who seem to charge CHRIST with *Folly* for *injoining* that *Purity* of *Heart*, and those good *Works*, which (say they)

^z 2 Cor. vi. 10.

must make us look off CHRIST on our selves—experiencing the contrary of what *some* maintain (who say that Holiness and good Works both destroy Faith, and make Man proud) even “that nothing so much humbles the Soul as Holiness of Heart and Life:” And that because Man is hereby brought back again to God, and made (as in the Beginning) *believing* or *dependant* upon him. In fine, nothing humbles the Soul so much as *Grace*, though it proceed even to *the Mind that was in CHRIST*. † And I am confident, that the *true Believer* at the same Time, that he feels his Soul a filling *with all the Fulness of GOD*, is as humbled as when the same Spirit, that hath wrought *the self-same* Thing in it, was (as proceeding from the Father) *reproving* it of Sin. Upon the whole, the Believer is so far from looking upon his Graces, so as to make him think highly of himself, that he glories in nothing but his *Infirmities*; for it is *here* only, that he finds the *Power of CHRIST to rest upon him*.^a And so he remains in himself an *empty Vessel*, till God shall fill him with Glory as well as Grace.

31. Thus to know GOD (and He only can be known through JESUS CHRIST,^b (is *true Wisdom*. Thus to know Him by his *own Spirit* (for all other Knowledge in Matters of Religion is but the *Subtilty* of the Old Serpent^c) is *Eternal Life*.^d Thus to know GOD is to be *restored* to him, and even *to love him*; and when we love him we shall fear him with a *filial*

† *Philippians* ii. 5.—*Luke* vi. 40.

^a *2 Cor.* xii. 9.

^b *Matt.* xi. 27.

^c *Gen.* iii. 1.

^d *John* xvii. 3.

Fear, and *testify* both our Love and Fear by keeping his Commandments. * *This Knowledge of God, and of him whom he hath sent, in a Fellowship of his Death and Resurrection, is that EXCELLENCY of the Knowledge of CHRIST for which a Believer in CHRIST, says he is willing to lose all.* ^c To conclude, thus to *know*, and consequently love God with *all* the Heart, and with *all* the Understanding, and with *all* the Soul, and with *all* the Strength ; and consequently (for the *second is like unto it*) to love our Neighbour as our selves (*doing unto all Mankind as we would they should do unto us*) *this, this*, as it is true *inward and outward Religion*—as it is the *Perfection of the Soul in the Image of God* : So is it *that Understanding*—the *alone Gift of God* ! that will enable us to *depart from Evil*.

32. And now that I have endeavoured to perform our dear departed Sister's Will, which was to instruct her Neighbours, whom she knew to be *altogether ignorant of God*—to have lost all *saving Knowledge of Him*, by looking to the Devil's Advice, even to *know* as well as to be happy *independently of Him*. Now that I have according to the Measure of Knowledge given unto my self) endeavoured to teach you, my Brethren, how you may recover the Knowledge of God, attainable *only through JESUS CHRIST*—that *Wisdom* whereby you may fear God—*that Understanding* whereby you may *depart from Evil*, and *so become wise unto Salvation* : Custom calls upon me—that Custom which is generally the great (if not the alone) End of such

* 1 John ii. 3, 4, 5.—v. 3.—^c Phil. iii. 10.—^c 8.

Discourses as this, to say something in her Praise: But this must not be done. For though *great Room* indeed there be, she requested I would not; "Knowing (as she said) that no good Thing was in *her*, that she was only a Sinner, on whom God had Mercy: And that to ascribe any thing to the Creature was to rob God of the Honour due *only* unto his Name. She said she was a *poor Beggar*, but had long *experienced* the Blessedness of Living on the Bounty of CHRIST; and had nothing good (much less *his Grace*) that she could call *her own*—that all *her* Merit was eternal Fire; but that notwithstanding He had given her that *Faith that had saved her Soul*: And therefore nothing was to be said of her."

33. But notwithstanding this Request, which proceeded from the humble (and therefore just) Thought she had of her self, I cannot conclude without thanking God for his Grace bestowed upon her. Blessed be his Holy Name then, that He gave her a good natural Understanding—an Understanding above the Advantages of her Education: But doubly blessed be his Name that He gave her a *spiritual* Understanding, whereby *she knew Him that was true*—an Understanding whereby she *departed from Evil*—whereby she *feared the LORD*. Let us thank God that He gave her great Prudence and Discretion, both in her Walk, or Conversation, and in her Discourse with her Acquaintance; for from the Time that she *began to know the LORD*, she hardly ever spoke rashly with her Lips; but always with *Reserve, Staydness, Caution, and Deliberation*. And used frequently to *remind* those she conversed with, to consider what they had said; if at any time any thing

thing *light* or *trifling*, or false (especially) had escaped them. She had nothing like *that* in her own Words, but so far from light or vain, or trifling, that it was generally *with Grace, season'd with Salt, good to the Use of edifying; ministring Grace to the Hearers*. And if she could not say something to the Glory of God or the Good of her Company, she chose to be silent. Let us bless God for the *uncommon Courage* He gave her, to *reprove* Sin generally wherever she knew it, without Fear of Man, or Respect of Persons. Hereby indeed she incurr'd a great deal of Displeasure and Ill-will, and much evil speaking against her. But this she look'd on as a *Blessing* (for her LORD had told her so) though intended by them as a Curse. ^f There be some of you here, my Friends, who have lost a good *Monitor* — one that watched over your Souls for good — O recollect whatever she said to you, and see that ye now *at length*, lay it to Heart, and improve by it *still*; for it is not too late. See, that ye improve by it *yet*, I say; for you shall shortly appear with her before God; and if you amend not by it, she will be justified in that Dispute to your Condemnation. Let us bless God that he counted her worthy, with many others in the Neighbourhood, to suffer Shame and Reproach for his Name's sake. ^g Go on, her *Fellow Sufferers*, as many of you as there are — dare still to confess CHRIST before Men, especially by seeking Salvation *alone* through Faith in his Name — Faith with all its *amiable, heavenly* Tempers, and *good Works* — and preach his Gospel (as she did) by the *Exemplarinefs* of your Lives; and indeed He will

^f Matt. v. 11.

^g Acts v. 41

confess

confess you before his Father which is in Heaven. Lastly, let us bless God, that she was one of those, who *dared* to profess his Gospel, not as many do in *Form* only, but in the *Power of Godliness*, in *Opposition* to the World; and notwithstanding the Load of Infamy it has labour'd under; being *every where* spoken against ^h (as *Himself* the SIGN ⁱ was) as much *now* among Christians, *so* call'd, as in St. Paul's Days among *Jews* and *Heathens*. Blessed be God that she was by *this Gospel* awaken'd, brought to Repentance, CONVERTED, JUSTIFIED, and SANCTIFIED, and now *received into Glory*. O! may many more of you *dare* to *know* JESUS CHRIST as she did, and not be Christians in Name only, but *experience* the *Power* of his Divine Names and Offices — the *Power* of that *Unction* that shall make you *Christians in Deed and in Truth* — that *so* being baptized *into* the *Power* of his Death and Resurrection, and being *conform'd* to Him in every Step of his Mediation, ye may reign with Him — ye may (with her) being made like Him here, ^k be *like Him* in his eternal and glorious Kingdom, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He liveth and reigneth ever One GOD World without End,

Amen.

^h Acts xxviii. 22. ⁱ Luke ii. 34. — ^k vi. 40.

The E N D.



